

AFTER THE BOOM:
The Coming of Age of Latin American Literary Criticism

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- JOURNEYS THROUGH THE LABYRINTH: LATIN AMERICAN FICTION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.* By Gerald Martin. (London and New York: Verso, 1989. Pp.424. \$45.00.)
- MYTH AND ARCHIVE: A THEORY OF LATIN AMERICAN NARRATIVE.* By Roberto González Echevarría. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Pp. 245. \$44.50.)
- THE SPANISH AMERICAN REGIONAL NOVEL: MODERNITY AND AUTOCHTHONY.* By Carlos J. Alonso. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990. Pp. 212. \$42.50.)
- LANDMARKS IN MODERN LATIN AMERICAN FICTION: AN INTRODUCTION.* Edited by Philip Swanson. (London and New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, 1990. Pp. 260. \$16.95 paper.)
- THE RADICAL SELF: METAMORPHOSIS TO ANIMAL FORM IN MODERN LATIN AMERICAN NARRATIVE.* By Nancy Gray Díaz. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988. Pp. 125. \$23.00.)
- LIVES ON THE LINE: THE TESTIMONY OF CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN AUTHORS.* Edited by Doris Meyer. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988. Pp. 314. \$25.00.)
- DETECTIVE FICTION FROM LATIN AMERICA.* By Amelia S. Simpson. (Cranbury, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1990. Pp. 218. \$35.00.)
- NARRATIVE INNOVATION AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN MEXICO.* By John S. Brushwood. (New York: Peter Lang, 1989. Pp. 200. \$32.50.)

For some time, scholars and critics have been variously lamenting and celebrating the death of the "Boom" in Latin American narrative. But only recently has scholarship begun to evince the calm repose necessary for reevaluating the literary events of the last three decades. Indeed, the entire trajectory of Latin American fiction is now being reconsidered. The volumes under review here attest to the fact that Latin American literary criticism, formerly overwhelmed by the stream of dazzling texts from Latin American authors and bombarded by new and "definitive" literary theories from Paris and New Haven, has come of age.

Two of the studies, Gerald Martin's *Journeys through the Labyrinth*

and Roberto González Echevarría's *Myth and Archive*, take the broad view, the first embracing most of the twentieth century while the second seeks the origins of contemporary fiction in sixteenth-century legal discourse. Carlos Alonso's *The Spanish American Regional Novel* reconsiders and offers a spirited defense of classics like *Don Segundo Sombra*, *Doña Bárbara*, and *La vorágine*. *Landmarks in Modern Latin American Fiction*, edited by Philip Swanson, contains fresh essays on selected authors and works of the "Boom," while the remaining more specialized volumes probe either specific issues or matters peripheral to the literary core.

Journeys through the Labyrinth: Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century is as iconoclastic as it is vast. Gerald Martin unabashedly follows an ideological banner on his journey through more than four centuries, striking down numerous gods of Latin American fiction and erecting new ones in their places. For example, he smites Jorge Luis Borges relentlessly as

almost ingenuously Eurocentric, ethnocentric, phallogocentric, a vicarious militarist and imperialist contemptuous of tribal cultures and native peoples everywhere: in short, an anti-Latin Americanist ashamed, like a significant stratum of Argentinian and Uruguayan society, to share the continent with Bolivians and Paraguayans, an idealist, an ideological perpetuator of the civilization-barbarism dichotomy (your barbarism confirms my civilization), and thus a brilliant player of the double game, duplicitous as well as dualist. (Pp. 161–62)

In contrast, the "indigenista" novels receive much kinder treatment than they have gotten from most other scholars. Martin even springs to the defense of Jorge Icaza's *Huasi-pungo*, which in his view "denies us the satisfactions of literariness . . . and refrains from assuaging our sense of shock and guilt by showing . . . that the Indians have their own . . . mythical culture, which may even be superior to ours despite or even because of their poverty" (p. 79). As one might expect from Martin's iconoclastic approach, the single Indianist novel that most scholars would save from the ashes, Ciro Alegría's *El mundo es ancho y ajeno*, is downgraded as "unwieldy, poorly organized and erratic in style, as well as having . . . technical and ideological limitations" (p. 87).

This pattern of turning the conventional view on its ear is maintained throughout Martin's book. If Miguel Angel Asturias's *Hombres de maíz* had been published in the 1970s, "it might have staked a convincing claim to being one of the world's great novels of the century" (p. 174). Carlos Fuentes's *Terra Nostra*, however, is a "titanic failure" (p. 237), while a number of Cuban postrevolutionary novels including Manuel Cofiño López's *La última mujer y el próximo combate* are termed "excellent" (p. 325).

Despite the series of shocks one receives from Martin's deliberately jarring assessments, *Journeys through the Labyrinth* is thought-provoking and entertaining—and at times even persuasive. The section on James Joyce's influence in Latin America is particularly convincing, and the chap-

ter entitled "Writers and Their Works: The Labyrinth of Mirrors" is a wild but exhilarating interweaving of literary coincidences that brings together everyone from Miguel Angel Asturias to Salman Rushdie. Even the devil (in this case Borges) is sometimes given his due for his precision, his complexity, and his charm, although fair warning is issued to "those who wish to use him either as an abstract thinking machine or as a justification for their own evasions" (p. 153). In sum, *Journeys through the Labyrinth* is a significant, possibly even necessary book. It retraces the vast background of contemporary Latin American fiction, omitting few (perhaps too few) of the novels that have attracted critical attention in the twentieth century. Further, Martin's study casts this panoramic view into new relief with judgments that are often painful but always provocative—and in that sense, healthy. One might hesitate, however, to recommend this book to the neophyte, despite its apparent appropriateness in scope and readability. After perusing Martin's analysis, the uninitiated reader might decide to begin his or her exploration of the Spanish American novel with an "excellent" work like *La última mujer y el próximo combate* and decide to dispense with a "self-indulgent" and "complacent" novel like Gabriel García Márquez's *El otoño del patriarca*, which is described as "well below the standard" of the author's previous works (p. 272).

Finally, Martin generally falls short of his stated intention "not to filter all Latin American cultural phenomena through our own preconceptions" (p. 359). His own personal social and political agenda is clear as he casts the literature of the Americas into the usual molds of "social realism," "magical realism," and so on.

In the latter respect, González Echevarría's *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* is far more radical and innovative, although it does not aspire to the iconoclasm evident in *Journeys through the Labyrinth*. González Echevarría also turns against "the blueprint of evolution and change [that] continues to be that of European literary or artistic historiography" (p. 38), aptly pointing out that historically Latin American novels have always suffered when approached and described by European standards. He offers instead a sweeping view of Latin American narrative as dominated by "three manifestations of Western hegemonic discourse: the law in the colonial period, the scientific writings of the many naturalists who ranged over the American continent in the nineteenth century, and anthropology, which supplies a dominant version of Latin American culture in the modern period . . ." (p. 172). Moreover, González Echevarría supports his thesis with compelling evidence. Novels have always pretended to be something other than literature (such as biography or history), and many of the finest Latin American narratives, works far more important to the history of narrative than the fiction of such authors as José Mármol and Jorge Isaacs, are not novels at all (*Facundo*, *Os Sertões*, *El águila y la serpiente* among others). Further, European

literary traditions like romanticism, realism, and naturalism have no relevance in the New World; and those literary works that deliberately sought to fit the European mold suffered, usually badly, for their efforts.

González Echevarría's method is both devious and intelligent: rather than begin by subjecting the reader to a lengthy history of legal discourse in the American colonies, he offers a lively and lucid reading of two canonical texts of the "Boom," Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* and García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*. The critic then points out various reasons why these and other such works cannot be read properly when approached as if they came from the European literary tradition. Only then does he retreat to what he considers to be the true foundations of contemporary Latin American narrative—the earliest writings of discovery and conquest. Primary among these are chronicles and legal documents, with a strong literary influx from such writers as Cervantes and El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega along with the entire picaresque tradition (emphasizing the shared insistence on their historical verity): "The novel, as well as much of the history of the New World, was told within the rhetorical constraints imposed by the new, centralized state of Spain. It was through the rhetoric of the notarial arts, and not as a result of a literary tradition, that the authors of *La Celestina* and the picaresque novels were able to incorporate the details of everyday life into their fictions" (p. 69).

A full chapter is dedicated to *Facundo* and *Os Sertões*, classic examples of scientific discourse, which are contrasted with the "novels" that were cast in the European literary mold in order to demonstrate that the latter are generally inferior to the former. Later on, González Echevarría argues that Rómulo Gallegos's *Doña Bárbara* marked the change from scientific to anthropological discourse, the mode that has since dominated Latin American literature. Subsequent novels, culminating particularly in *Cien años de soledad*, collect and preserve the myths of the various traditions that have both fed and grown out of the New World experience.

Myth and Archive ends by posing a series of questions about the present and future of Latin American fiction. González Echevarría suggests that archival fiction has run its course and that if narrative is to regain its lost vitality, it will have to find new models for what he terms a "new hegemonic discourse" (p. 186). He also suggests that "communicative systems" are waiting in the wings. Whether this tentatively advanced speculation materializes or not, *Myth and Archive* is without question one of the most significant books on Spanish American fiction to be published to date.

Querulous readers, however, will find adequate material to satisfy their desire to find fault. González Echevarría continues to deify Alejo Carpentier, although he deflects criticism somewhat by confessing that his reading of *Los pasos perdidos* may be "obsessive" (p. ix). At times, González Echevarría's arguments become repetitious and even tedious. Some read-

ers may also be troubled by interpretations that appear to be warped for the sake of argument. For example: is Luis Cervantes of *Los de abajo* really a man of science, a sort of anthropologist who “is frustrated in his efforts to understand the revolutionaries with whom he travels” (p. 156), or is he a base opportunist who joins the band to save his own hide and line his pockets as fully as possible before sneaking off into the night? Minor quibbles aside, it would be difficult to deny the importance of *Myth and Archive*. All who have taught Latin American fiction will have pondered the significance of *Facundo*, *Os Sertões*, and other masterpieces of nonfiction, and most will have found ways to slip these works into their novel courses under the guise of historical writings whose authors lost their objectivity and control and subsequently lapsed into novelistic writing. González Echevarría has taken a major step toward explaining why such works belong not just in courses on Latin American literature but in those that focus on the novelistic tradition, and he has also given us good reason to reexamine the entire narrative history of the New World.

Carlos Alonso, greatly influenced by González Echevarría and his ideas, takes a fresh look at several canonical novels in *The Spanish American Regional Novel: Modernity and Autochthony*. Unfortunately, some potential readers may not be willing to struggle through this significant study because of its difficult and pretentious style. It is nevertheless well worth suffering through, despite having to swim upstream through needlessly difficult prose. To cite only a couple of instances: “Given that Latin America did not possess objective historical conditions to sustain the discourse of modernity, the adoption of the rhetoric of modernity had to be accompanied by a surreptitious gesture that sought to take leave from the constative exigencies of that rhetoric” (pp. 22–23); and “I would argue that *La vorágine*’s dissimilarity with the other two novels is essentially the result of a shift in sign from positive to negative in the conception of autochthony that rules the text; that is, the qualities that differentiate it from the works examined earlier are attributable to the fact that it portrays what can be described as a negative autochthonous condition” (p. 136). As the last example suggests, the author is often aware of the opacity of his language, as evidenced by his constant efforts at rephrasing.

The first chapter is the most difficult, and by the end of the second, the author is fortunately ready to define his principal terms and premises:

For reasons of economy the term “autochthonous” has been employed until now to subsume a number of concepts such as soul, identity, being, authenticity, etc., that are charged with ontological value and that recur throughout the *novela de la tierra* and its criticism. I would like to suggest that hereafter “the autochthonous” should be understood to be a discursive mode based on a rhetorical figure encompassing three elements: spoken language, geographical location, and a given human activity, that is, the three registers among which the concept of *ambiente* effects a sort of counterpoint in Torres-Rioseco’s critical discourse on the *novela de*

la tierra. . . . I will attempt to establish the rhetorical density of the discourse of the autochthonous as it manifests itself in them, and will tease out specific textual practices that dismantle or otherwise render problematic the authority of that discursive mode. (Pp. 75–76, 78)

The Spanish American Regional Novel accomplishes a number of important tasks. It offers compelling new readings of *Don Segundo Sombra*, *Doña Bárbara*, and *La vorágine* that reinterpret these classics and consequently require new evaluations. Moreover, Alonso gives Arturo Torres-Rioseco his due as a major literary critic and historian, explaining that Torres-Rioseco's "lack of methodological rigor should not obscure the fact that his selection of specific works effectively identified legitimate ways of encoding the autochthonous in a novelistic text" (pp. 72–73). Not the least of the study's virtues is that it to some degree rescues "novelas de la tierra" (novels in which the land itself plays a major role) from the ignominy and scorn with which they have been viewed by some champions of the "Boom," restoring them to their rightful place of honor. More specifically, Alonso's study occasionally raises points that one feels should have been made long ago: "there is a patently ideological message in *Doña Bárbara* that is virtually identical to the one advanced by Güiraldes's novel: both texts endeavor to shift the grounds for legitimate ownership of the land from a legalistic/genealogical plane into an ethical realm, where personal involvement and the direct assumption of the responsibilities of ownership become the primary criteria" (p. 111). In short, although one must question the implied purpose of *The Spanish American Regional Novel*—the legitimacy of reinterpreting texts merely to reincorporate them into current criticism (which Alonso calls "reactivation")—much good has come from his efforts to read "against the grain."

While Alonso's study limits itself to revisiting traditional novels, Philip Swanson's edited collection *Landmarks in Modern Latin American Fiction* is concerned only with certain canonical texts of the "Boom." This rather heterogeneous collection of eleven essays begins with "Background to the Boom" and ends with "After the Boom," both by Swanson. Because the intervening nine chapters were written by nine different critics on nine different works, it is difficult to generalize about the volume as a whole. Perhaps more than any other single work evaluated here, this collection offers a good introductory overview of the "Boom" that would help neophytes (despite the limitation of including quotations in Spanish only). Although some essays are directed more to the expert, the introduction is particularly helpful to the uninitiated, as are the biographical sketches presented for each author under discussion.

As one would expect, the individual chapters are somewhat uneven in quality. The best are Pamela Bacarisse on Manuel Puig's *Boquitas pintadas*, Peter Standish on Mario Vargas Llosa's *La casa verde*, and Swanson's

conclusion. Bacarisse's and Standish's essays will prove enlightening to new readers struggling with these two novels but also to experienced scholars. In other chapters, Donald Shaw contributes fine discussions of stories from Borges's *Ficciones*, and Gerald Martin offers a lively and sympathetic reading of Miguel Angel Asturias's *El Señor Presidente*.

Peter Beardsell provides a sensitive interpretation of Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, despite making a few questionable assertions. Notwithstanding the overall high quality of his essay, many who have studied Rulfo's opus carefully will be troubled by the critic's assertion that Donis's sister actually decomposes in the heat (p. 79) or that the evidence for Abundio killing Pedro Páramo is inconclusive, contradicting the critic's statement elsewhere that Abundio actually killed his father (pp. 93, 91). Beardsell also fails to separate those characters who are dead but are nonetheless encountered by Juan Preciado when he arrives in Comala from those who are still living.

Other essays are more problematic. Robin Fiddian seems to have confused the time sequences and their interrelationships in Fuentes's *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*, as well as what individual characters know and when they know it. Matters are further muddled by her failure to introduce the novel's characters clearly—both Regina (Cruz's first love) and Lilia (his last mistress) are presented to the reader with no explanation as to who they are or why they are important.

James Higgins's piece on García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, converts far too much of the text into metaphor and allegory, effectively reducing the pleasure of "a good read," the primary quality that thrust this novel into international prominence. The essay offers some interesting possibilities nonetheless, including the theory that events are not presented as they occurred but as they were perceived by locals—hence the account of Remedios's disappearance that prevails is the one created by her family to hide the fact that she ran away with a man (p. 146).

Steven Boldy's essay on Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* is helpful for the newcomer but offers little new over his book, *The Novels of Julio Cortázar* (1980). Swanson's essay on José Donoso's *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*, a problematic text, does little to assuage the reader's suffering. It seems oversimplistic and unfair to dismiss the complexities of this novel by saying that "the obvious answer, quite simply, is that the narrator is mad" (p. 189). On the positive side, Swanson takes legitimate issue with those who would "thematize" the text and reduce its every action and description to simple metaphors that signify something else.

Swanson's best work in the volume is his conclusion, which provides an excellent discussion of the "post-Boom" and its political implications. He also offers a good overview of the incorporation of popular literary forms—such as the soap opera (*telenovela*)—into serious literature

and gives insightful if cursory attention to Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Severo Sarduy, Isabel Allende, and numerous other important writers who are not discussed in the essays in this collection.

Further insights into the “Boom” and the “post-Boom” are provided by the many writings incorporated into another edited collection, Doris Meyer’s *Lives on the Line: The Testimony of Contemporary Latin American Authors*. Except for a brief introduction and even shorter blurbs on the individual writers included, this entire volume consists of writers’ statements (most with a political twist) on the world they inhabit. The selections range from Borges’s laconic description of his early political difficulties to a politically charged address by Sandinista official Ernesto Cardenal. In total, Meyer has gathered together and found or provided translations for statements by thirty different Latin American authors ranging from the famous (Pablo Neruda, Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz, Mario Vargas Llosa) to the not so famous (Lêda Ivo, Pablo Antonio Cuadra, Antonio Skármeta, Lygia Fagundes Telles). Some selections have already become old standards, such as Cortázar’s reply to Roberto Fernández Retamar or Vargas Llosa’s “Social Commitment and the Latin American Writer,” but others, such as Elena Poniatowska’s “And Here’s to You, Jesusa,” are made available in English for the first time in this collection.

All the selections were originally published since 1960, and each is fascinating in its own right. Poniatowska’s essay on the real-life model for the main character in her testimonial novel, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, is particularly warm and loving. Luisa Valenzuela’s account of what it was like to struggle to write under Argentina’s brutal dictatorship, entitled “A Legacy of Poets and Cannibals: Literature Revives in Argentina,” is quite moving. And Rosario Ferré shows off her intellectual prowess in musing aloud about feminist literary theories and the major writers of the world in “The Writer’s Kitchen.”

The translations seem competently done. Despite a few errors (Isaac Goldemberg’s novel is listed as *La vida fragmentaria de Don Jacobo Lerner*, suggesting that the editor may have translated the English title into Spanish), *Lives on the Line* is lively and informative, especially for cognoscenti, who are likely to enjoy having so many declarations and opinions under one cover.

Much narrower in focus is Nancy Gray Díaz’s *The Radical Self*, which limits itself to the motif, focus, or theme of metamorphosis to animal form in a few works of Latin American fiction. The topic has the potential for a somewhat broader historical reach, but this study confines itself to the twentieth century. It would be difficult to justify the author’s selection of primary texts over other possibilities because it is not evident why Díaz chose to analyze Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo*, Asturias’s *Hombres de maíz*, Mário de Andrade’s *Macunaíma*, Cortázar’s “Axolotl,” and Carlos

Fuentes's *Zona sagrada*. In any case, she offers close and generally accurate readings of the works she selected.

Specialists may be troubled by Díaz's characterization of "Axolotl" as a story of aggression (p. 79), however, and neophytes as well as those who have not read the narratives in question recently may well find the study of limited use in its assumption of in-depth knowledge of all the works discussed. Occasionally, Díaz reaches out to the non-expert, explaining, for example, that *perro* means "dog," but she remains strangely silent about less common terms like *cimarrón*. Even so, *The Radical Self*, although eclectic and narrow in focus, offers straightforward and generally well-done discussions of several important texts.

Amelia Simpson had a much wider audience in mind, those interested in the far more popular literary form of the whodunnit. She divides her study, *Detective Fiction from Latin America*, into two parts. The first deals with four major centers of the genre—the Río de la Plata, Brazil, Mexico, and Cuba—while the second part covers three types of detective fiction in chapters entitled "The Uses of Satire," "Investigations without Solutions," and "History as Mystery."

Simpson takes care to point out some basic differences between the narratives she is studying and those more familiar to a wider audience. In Brazil, she observes, there are no "authentic" or mimetic detective novels because all suspects would probably be arrested and tortured at the outset of the investigation (p. 20). In fact, Simpson quotes a number of experts who argue that true detective literature is rare or nonexistent in Latin America because the real criminal would not be the accused, and the guilty would be punished only if poor.

Consequently, *Detective Fiction from Latin America* may interest a much wider audience than those who like detective fiction only if it is "pure." As Simpson explains at the outset, in Latin America the genre has served "as an innocuous form of entertainment, a vehicle for social protest, an instrument of ideological persuasion, or a framework within which to debate social, ethical, or literary problems" (p. 9). For example, Argentine Rodolfo Walsh, one of the country's most famous *desaparecidos*, used the genre as a vehicle for social protest (pp. 44–45). Detective fiction has been widely used for similar purposes in Brazil's often oppressive political climate, frequently disguised as slapstick or parody. Brazil is also home to a particularly interesting form, the collaborative detective novel, in which distinguished authors each contribute one or more chapters to the final product.

Cuban detective fiction, which began in 1971, is (like all art produced on the island) created according to official prescription. Simpson cites Francisco Garzón Céspedes, a judge in the 1973 Concurso: "Detective genre works will be of a didactic nature and will further awareness,

and prevention, of all antisocial and counterrevolutionary activities" (p. 97). Yet Simpson finds Cuban detective literature to be entertaining and at times even humorous. More significantly, she notes that in the work of Arnaldo Correa in the 1980s one finds an implicit acknowledgement of imperfections in the Cuban system and even of "ongoing criminal activity in Cuban society" (p. 115), suggesting a major shift in what Cuban officials are allowing to be published.

In part two, Simpson sets aside characteristics of the genre as produced in specific regions to explore variations from the norm as reflected in individual works. Of particular interest are detective stories that produce no solutions, a radical departure for the classic tale but a universal form nonetheless, as Simpson points out. Finally, in "History as Mystery," she delves into a number of well-known narratives, including García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*.

Detective Fiction from Latin America is a thoroughly engaging book that will benefit several kinds of readers: aficionados of the genre, literary scholars interested in the authors discussed, and those concerned with the relationship between popular art and the societies that produce it, particularly when those societies are oppressive. The conclusion is especially useful, and readers should not ignore the informative notes.

The final volume under review, John Brushwood's *Narrative Innovation and Political Change in Mexico*, is titillating for those who like to pore over texts in search of narrative characteristics and themes that may somehow anticipate or predict political or social change. While Brushwood warns that there is no clear relationship of cause and effect, he provides convincing support for his hypothesis that at least in twentieth-century Mexico, certain narrative changes have preceded rather than followed political changes.

Narrative Innovation presents a thorough overview of major Mexican literary groups and movements. Even skeptics will find Brushwood's discussions of *Ateneo*, *Contemporáneos*, the Colonialistas, and the Estridentistas rewarding. He makes a number of significant points: the Estridentistas preceded and in many ways anticipated the Cristero revolt and the Cárdenas regime; Vanguardismo is closely related to the Mexican Revolution; the narrative strategies of Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, and others of that period can be identified with Mexican nationalism; and the metafiction of the 1960s and 1970s correspond to a period of Mexican crisis and self-analysis. Finally, Brushwood's readings of recent novels predict, on the basis of both thematic and technical factors, a major period of conservatism (p. 82). Thus far history seems to be supporting his prediction.

Narrative Innovation's conclusion is not simply a recap. Here Brushwood points out that narrative is a much better predictor of change than is painting, and he repeats his contention that narrative does not merely reflect social change but may predict (although not cause) it. As always,

Brushwood's analysis is thorough, based on meticulous discussions of dozens of novels (many of which will be obscure to most readers), revealing once again his close knowledge and understanding of the complexities of Mexican history.

These seven volumes, although highly diverse in their interests, motivations, and intentions, demonstrate clearly that contemporary criticism of Latin American fiction is in excellent health. The authors and contributors are confident of the value of their contributions and secure in their methodologies. Each of these works represents important reading for specialists, and almost all of them will prove useful to neophytes as well. All in all, this highly diverse collection of literary scholarship suggests that the critical study of Latin American fiction truly has come of age. The specialized studies provide valuable new insights and perspectives, but more significantly, Martin, González Echevarría, Alonso, and Brushwood offer new theoretical orientations that will inform and shape the arguments of scholars for years to come.